

THE FRENCH INTELLECTUAL MERRY-GO-ROUND

Right, Left, Up and Down

SHERRY MANGAN

THE postwar resumption of transatlantic cultural communications brought American Francophiles a series of surprises. It was soon discovered that André Malraux—who had moved across the whole political spectrum from Marxist revolutionary (*Man's Fate*) through Stalinist apologist (*Man's Hope*) to Bonapartist hack (tub-thumper in the Gaullist weekly *Rassemblement*)—was no biological sport. The whole cultural constellation was politically unrecognizable, dozens of pre-war "rightist" intellectuals turning up as "leftists" and vice versa and versa vice. Nor did the new Liberation period realignment stay put: with each twitch of history, the kaleidoscope has presented a new pattern. What is happening?

Unadmitted venality is that which the record of French writing, especially journalism, causes to spring quickest to anyone's mind. In France a writer usually starts young and ambitious at the extreme Left to end up old and successful at the extreme Right. And though recent sharp political reversals now make this progress a zig-zag rather than a straight line, material advantage, real or

fancied, certainly explains a majority of cases. Nobody is a conscious villain, of course; rather, an alert writer can follow the Ariadne thread (invisible to the general public) of an inner integrity through vicissitudes that cause him, justifiably, to denigrate today precisely what he whitewashed yesterday. The hitch occurs when some rude fellow points to the curious coincidence that the subtle convolutions of that thread roughly parallel the rise and fall in political or economic power of the various ideological tendencies, or, with the Stalinists, the gyrations of the Kremlin weather vane.

A recent such spoil-sport is "Orion" (M. Jean Maze), who has assembled a damning confrontation of several decades' texts by France's more conspicuous political men of letters, in a murderous little work titled *Nouveau Dictionnaire des Girouettes*, the latest version of a scabrous and salutary compendium of the wondrous acrobatics of "principle" of some twelve hundred French public men originally published one hundred and thirty years ago.

Herein are confronted, for example, Paul Claudel's fulsome poetic eulogies, only three years apart, of Marshal Pétain and General de Gaulle. There is the whole gamut of Louis Aragon, from his earliest semi-surrealist anti-Communism, through his Communist period of super-revolutionary anti-patriotic poetry, the Resistance period of anti-revolutionary super-patriotic poetry, and so on to today's yellow journalism. François Mauriac, noted Catholic novelist and playwright, who in 1940 was declaiming "*Hé bien non!*" to General de Gaulle in a *Figaro* article beginning, "On June 17, after Marshal Pétain gave his country that supreme proof of love . . ." (the "gift of his person"), in 1944 reappears gushing ecstatically of the same De

IN 1934, a showing of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* in Paris resulted in a riot and street battle between the Right and Left. For the excitable French take their intellectuals seriously; and the mercurial French intellectuals take their politics even more seriously. In this article, SHERRY MANGAN discovers some pattern in the shifting allegiances and ideologies of leading members of the French intelligentsia in the present intense political struggle in that country. Mr. Mangan has lived in Paris since 1925, and served for over ten years as Paris correspondent for *Time*. In the early 30's, he helped edit a "little magazine," *Pagany*, which created something of a stir. His previous contributions to COMMENTARY include: "Is De Gaulle Fascist?" (January 1948) and "Is Europe's Middle Class Finished?" (July 1948).

Gaulle, "I can devour him with my eyes at leisure." *Et cetera ad nauseam.*

But less malicious examination shows that in many cases to explain these about-faces as prompted by immediate personal advantage is insufficient. Behind these paradoxical groupings, splits, regroupings, re-splits, and re-regroupings, must be sought more complex motivations of political choice.

FRENCH intellectuals have long been proud of their nonconformist independence, not only toward official opinion and power, but also toward all "schools" and "systems." If Anglo-Saxon thought is predominantly empirical, and German metaphysical, the typical French intellectual has for four centuries been the incorrigible individualist.

This attitude's negative side is not merely that it precludes a consistent system of reasoning, but that its aversion to "dogmatism," as it calls principle, gives exaggerated importance to external events, which become the decisive factor in determining political realignments. The tendency is reinforced by the French middle class's well-known longing for stability and security. The decisive event, which occurs about every decade, is thus sensed, not as an example confirming or modifying systematic thought, but as the hostile intrusion of an unforeseen accident jarring comfortable ideas and forcing one to take a stand, "*une prise de position.*"

Naturally, French intellectuals cannot all decide their positions on purely abstract grounds, since they do not live in an economic vacuum. Yet because there is in general a greater separation or insulation between their breadwinning occupations and their political sympathies and writings than in the United States, Britain, or Weimar Germany, they believe they can be more independent. Many are civil servants with permanent tenure (e.g., the diplomat Paul Claudel); others practice professions (e.g., the physicians Duhamel and Céline); others are simply *rentiers*. Even most of those who live by their pens do so non-politically; either by successful novels and plays, or by working as critics, reporters, or rewrite men,

often anonymous, in "neutral" periodicals or press agencies. This strict separation of income from writing gives them the freedom to change at will the orientation and destination of their slanted articles and creative work. The exception is, naturally, the French Communist party, which tries, with varying success, to tie its fellow-travelers to itself by material means.

In the United States, Britain, and Weimar Germany, a sort of social-democratic liberalism created a whole framework of government, university, and school jobs, plus a well-paying left-of-center press, which enabled writers to integrate their thinking and their incomes. But France's social democratic current has had little appeal for writers, who have tended to split off further to the Left or Right.

In this tradition of independence, two main sub-currents can be discerned. The "subjectivist" attitude provokes writers, journalists, and critics suddenly to embrace "great causes," often contradictory to their previous ideas, but appealing to their conscience, imagination, or even Latin temperament—as when the Catholic novelist Bernanos sprang to join the Spanish Republicans. The "objectivist" attitude, less emotional but no less drastic, provokes literary men to risk their achieved success by supporting nonconformist minorities because their individualist ratiocinations suddenly "prove" to them that such groups are right against the "as always" wrong majority—as when numerous intellectuals between the wars rallied to either fascism or Stalinism.

The most decisive event of the last decade in France was obviously the 1940 defeat and its consequences: Occupation, Vichy, Resistance, etc. It provoked immediate and curious developments.

LET us examine first the rightists. They might equally justly be termed the Maurrasians, for since the beginning of the century it is a sad fact that, next to Marx, no other individual has influenced so large a sector of French youth as that once honest poet, Charles Maurras, and his sinisterly

brilliant *Action Française*. The rightist intellectuals of the 30's—remember France, where fascism never took power, is significantly the only country where really talented writers like Céline, Brasillach, and Drieu La Rochelle, who made their living writing for mass-circulation weeklies, supported fascist movements—all proudly traced their ideological genealogy from Maurras.

Now Maurras's doctrine was an irrational hodge-podge of purely emotional political thinking. Militant nationalism was reinforced by a paranoiac hatred of Germany ("the hereditary enemy"). Tacked on were such diverse ideas as: Catholic royalism, hatred of the Republic ("la Gueuse" born of defeats), of Bonapartism (cause of defeats for one hundred years), and of Jews (because "alien" and "international"). This mixture was completed by violent hatred of parliamentarism (Parliament, the "legal country," contrasted with the Nation, the "real country"); glorification of war (as "an ideal field for the realization of all the virile qualities") and colonialism (in racist theories of the inferiority of colonial peoples).*

The year 1940 posed the Maurrasians a terrible dilemma. Occupation by the "hereditary enemy," "lost honor," and "moral prostration," and the German annexation of symbolic Alsace-Lorraine aroused their hostility to the Pétain regime, "product of the country's disgrace." General de Gaulle, himself formed in the Maurrasian school, reacted thus.

But on the other hand the abolition of the Republic, the army's and upper clergy's predominance in the new "French state," the replacement of liberalism's abhorred slogans by those truly Maurrasian keywords, "*Travail, Famille, Patrie*," represented the sudden attainment of ends for which these same intellectuals had long striven. Maurras unhesitatingly saluted the armistice in 1940 with

*The Maurras tradition is not dead, or even underground. A newspaper, *Aspects de la France* (A.F., like the *Action Française*), today openly defends the above articles of faith, claims Pétain's armistice saved the Allies, and charges "Jewry" with planning France's destruction by an invasion of Germany.

the cry, "Now we must achieve really great things." The chance to lead France "with its real elite" could not be passed up: Maurras, arch-nationalist and Boche-eater, became paradoxically the *eminence grise* of the German-protected Pétain regime; and many of his followers went along.

But as the war's tide turned, most Maurrasians broke with Vichy and many joined the Resistance. Typical was André Rousseaux, a literary critic, who first followed his master to the *Figaro* at Lyons, later joined the *maquis*, after the Liberation wrote for the Stalinoid *Lettres Françaises*, and, when Maurras was tried, did not hesitate to call for his head. Today, having swung full circle, Rousseaux—in the Gaullist *Rassemblement*—accuses the Socialists of betraying "true socialism." Characteristically he makes his living, however, writing for the non-Gaullist *Figaro Littéraire*.

At the political spectrum's other end, the repeated impact of external events drove the militant "integral"-pacifist intellectuals to a series of splits and realignments. When "war-loving" Hitler replaced "peace-loving" Weimar, those for whom anti-fascism outweighed pacifism split to become "bellicists." The rest, seeking "peace at any price," rallied in a strong fraction around the Socialist party's secretary, Paul Faure, and hailed Munich as a victory. The 1940 defeat again split them, driving some into the Resistance, while others—on genuinely ideological grounds—found themselves collaborationists, and surprised bedfellows of the Maurrasians. Jean Galtier-Boissière of the brilliant pre-war *Crapouillot*, rallying point of pacifist intellectuals, reports in the malicious and informative journal he kept how an "integral" became secretary of the fascist *Matin's* editorial board, and how the fine novelist Jean Giono let a new novel run in the collaborationist *La Gerbe*. "A lack of tact," comments M. Galtier-Boissière.

THE Resistance was also an *omnium-gatherum* of odd bedfellows. The current Paris air is blue with mutual accusations of "betrayal of the Resistance." A recent ex-

pression is *Le Sacrifice du Matin*, the memoirs of General Guillaing de Bénouville, a Gaullist who on joining the Resistance unhesitatingly accepted all other groupings therein. His sincere if naive book is mostly sad nostalgia for the days of "common sacrifice" before he realized that the Stalinists and others pursued quite different final aims.

If such writers as Colonel Rémy, chief of an Allied Resistance spy ring, and aviation ace Closterman today bitterly complain of "betrayal," it is because their own motives—"to forge a new France" freed of the "weakness" of parliamentarism, the "rottenness" of political parties, "the tyranny of the trade unions," to restore France's "declining power in the international arena" (motives hardly different from those that led Maurras to choose Pétain's Vichy)—are still unrealized. Whereas many of those semi-revolutionary intellectuals surrounding the vanguard newspapers *Combat* and *Franc-Tireur* feel equally bitterly that De Gaulle and Company, whom they uncritically supported from 1940 on, have betrayed the Resistance, only because their quite opposed motives—hope for greater freedom, social justice, less power to capitalists, a press freed from the grip of the "money powers"—never seemed farther from realization. The Resistance slogans—"liberation," "renovation"—were empty vessels that each intellectual filled with his own ideological content: hence, inevitably, when liberation itself dissipated the so-called "common doctrine," each man was sent scurrying to a new compact with new allies.

THE "équivoque," the contradiction within the Resistance, was further complicated by the fact that the Stalinist intellectuals in it were simultaneously, on the one hand, violent nationalists, tricolor defenders of "the strong state," a "strong army," and a "powerful country," and, on the other, violent reformists, radical advocates of political and social advances after "victory." Small wonder that naive Resistants felt indignant on discovering that the Stalinists sought neither a strong France nor reforms, but only the key positions in the state and economy.

Outside America, France has been the country where the CP's cynical "*politiques*" have shown the most astuteness in winning over emotional "*intellectuels*" who, ideologically anything but Marxists, could be counted on to take propaganda at face value. In the Popular Front and Resistance periods, the Stalinist line was neo-Jacobinism: militant nationalism leavened by a trace of "revolutionary Messianism," struggle against "the reaction" linked with vague promises of social justice—all in all, a line with a strong appeal for left-wing intellectuals wanting to serve some great "people's cause" and obsessed by the simplistic notion of "uniting all progressive elements" around such a historically outmoded program as "Jacobinism."

Their shrewd political shepherds, knowing their individualistic "independence," did not herd them tightly at first. They were permitted to be openly sceptical of "Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism" as doctrine, provided they showed enthusiasm for the Kremlin's power politics as clever "political realism."

A great many fellow-travelers have a secret disdain of the Marxist *Weltanschauung* as a complete system, or, as they would say, a "dogma." They "Westernize" and polish the rough-edged doctrine, seek French naturalization papers for it. This intellectual "elite" has always enjoyed tracing Marxism's genealogy back to Descartes, and its real labor of love, begun in 1945, is the drafting of a new *Encyclopédie Française*, on the model of D'Alembert and Diderot, Gallicizing Stalinism.

But its intellectuals' incurable individualism has finally begun to worry the French Communist party, whose central committee recently rumbled about "ideological party discipline," while *Humanité* started articles on "the duties of intellectuals, members of our party." Yet even a leading whip in this drive, the brilliant journalist Pierre Hervé, editorialist of the official Stalinist weekly *Action*, who has demonstrated his "discipline" by doing every kind of dirty job, cannot change his French skin. When recently assigned the task of presenting Zhdanov in *Action* as a philosopher, he theorized at

length that men of action may express opinions on philosophy, but did not allude at all to Zhdanov's "contributions." Similarly, the biologist Marcel Prenant, asked in an open forum for his opinion of Lysenko's theories of genetics and Moscow's condemnation of Mendelianism, replied by reference to the condemnation of Darwinism in Tennessee, without mentioning Lysenko's innovations or underwriting the Stalinist upper synod's decision on biological faith and morals.

Stalinism has recruited and retained, not only debauched great talents like Aragon, or tedious hacks like Claude Morgan, but many unquestionably first-rate intellectuals: the philosophers Lefèvre and Politzer (killed by the Nazis), scholars and scientists such as Wallon, Prenant, the Joliot-Curies, and the late Paul Langevin; painters and poets like Picasso and Paul Éluard, and writers too innumerable to list. But the permanently faithful among these luminaries form only a minority of the fellow-travelers, most of whom are likely to break with a great deal of (literary) noise, at the next sharp turn. Part are usually wooed back by the zig-zag thereafter; but some maintain the rupture, as did the "revolutionary" Surrealists when, after the Stalin-Laval pact, French Stalinism began advocating national defense. The "Jacobins" similarly fell off when, with the Stalin-Hitler pact, French Stalinism reversed its field. That break was definitive with but few, among them the talented young novelist Paul Nizan, whose early death spared him the question of reconsideration. Most returned in 1941, including Albert Bayet, highly vocal president of the *Fédération de la Presse Française*, and the Joliot-Curies, who in 1939 had signed a manifesto attacking Stalinist policy. Stalinist heroism in the Resistance naturally brought a heavy new crop of young intellectuals. Another attraction may have been the fact that the French Communist party publishes or secretly controls, in Paris alone, three dailies, a score of weeklies, and a dozen monthlies—not to count innumerable regional, trade-union, party, and crypto-party publications.

Since the Liberation, however, a new series of external events—the revelation of Stalinism's policy in France, with its cynical denial of everything the Communizing workers and intellectuals had thought they were fighting for, plus the barbarism of Stalinist activity in Eastern Europe—has caused further shifts among emotional intellectuals.

OUTSTANDING in this category, though with special motives, is André Malraux, a great novelist and a powerful influence. Malraux has always been less an opportunist than (in both the good and bad sense) an adventurer. He became a Communist sympathizer through neither human sympathy with the oppressed nor convictions of Communism's desirability or likelihood, but rather because only the revolutionary movement could satisfy his thirst for intense activity. A study in the *Revue de Paris* once convincingly explained the unconscious origins of his passion for activism by his psychic relationship with death, illustrated by the desire of his novels' heroes to leave after their deaths "some scars on the earth that will not disappear."

Malraux's late break with Stalinism was no explosion of moral indignation, for which there had been ample occasions previously. Witness his whitewashing of Stalinist policy in Spain in *Man's Hope*, and his refusal to testify even on a straight point of fact during the Moscow Trials. Once he recognized the limitations that Stalinism's totalitarian controls imposed on him as a heroic individualist, Gaullism represented merely a more adventurous field of "intensified activity."

Malraux cannot bear to explain his shift as correction of a previous error, but tries to pretend that it is not he, but the political world, which has been turned upside down in the past fifteen years. His uneasy conscience makes him present his support of authoritarian Gaullism as a fight for freedom against totalitarianism. In his dialogue with James Burnham in *Partisan Review* of April 1948, he alleges that De Gaulle's *Rassemblement Populaire Française* is considered rightist only because of fiendish

Stalinist propaganda, ignoring the plain fact that all French reaction is clustering round it. In another speech he grotesquely claims that only complete liberty can guarantee artistic flowering and only the authoritarian state can guarantee such liberty. Malraux's rationalizing acrobatics are a particularly French type of Old Hegelianism.

WE HAVE seen how emotional integral-pacifists and integral-nationalists bedded together under Vichy; while democratic patriots, hastening to pan-Slavic Stalinism, crossed en route former fellow-travelers speeding to reactionary Gaullism. It is time to glance at the "objectivists."

If the French "subjectivist" is an embracer of "great causes," the "objectivist" is a destroyer of "false idols." Both are fundamentally sceptics; but the latter is sceptical even toward his own enthusiasms: his badge is an ironic smile; he is "tough." The most recent examples are the editors of the late Marxist *Revue Internationale* and a fraction from the vanguard daily *Franc-Tireur*, who, while embracing Stalinism as the only "realist" alternative to "renascent fascism" (as they consider Gaullism), destroy any "illusions" by a "liberal anti-Stalinism" which still permits them to write what they like.

Those "objectivists" who chose Vichy did so, not from emotions about the victor of Verdun or Franco-German friendship, but from calculation about the chances of war and the optimum position of France (and of its intellectuals' privileges) thereafter. Gaston Bergery, for instance, once *enfant terrible* of French Communism, one of the brightest minds in the pre-war parliament, frankly explained his adherence to Vichy thus: "Roosevelt having refused to answer positively Reynaud's appeal, Russia being allied to Germany, and Britain exposed to imminent invasion, logic could conclude only that France did not at that moment dispose of forces enabling it not to accept the German conditions of armistice." History has proved that the "realistic" Bergery saw with great clarity exactly as far as the end of his nose.

The perfect example of "rational" weather-

cock is Alfred Fabre-Luce, who is about the only unrepentant fascist writer openly daring to practice in postwar Europe. In a series of books illegally* and legally published since the Liberation, he continues to profess that internally consistent class realism which, backed by his wealth and connections, released him from jail, first under the Gestapo, then under the FFI, and finally from the Provisional Government's dubious regime of "administrative internment." The line of this saucy *grand seigneur* of French fascism is that sentimental patriotism is silly in an age of power politics, and that Resistance policy was emotional in the historical context—i.e., it took less moral courage in 1942 to throw a bomb into a German barracks, insuring death for fifty French hostages, than to temporize with the occupying powers to save millions of Frenchmen from being drafted or deported.

Like the devil quoting scripture, Fabre-Luce does a devastating job of debunking his opponents. But his real tactic is painfully obvious, "sewn with basting-thread." Even while Fabre-Luce and his fellows were denouncing the "malignity" of the "usurper" De Gaulle, they were already quietly preparing a politically logical realignment behind the "Republican" banner of his RPF. Fabre-Luce's recent defense of Pétainism has now become classic: that France needed both Allies-backed De Gaulle as a sword and German-backed Pétain as a shield.

GENERAL DE GAULLE will naturally be ready when the moment comes. True, the recent movement for Pétain's release from the Ile d'Yeu found him opposed—for public consumption. But his real opinion appears in a significant (and significantly un-denied) section from his semi-official biography, *De Gaulle, cet inconnu*, by his

*Cynical fascist though he is, a certain courage cannot be denied to Fabre-Luce, imperturbably publishing at a moment when the almost daily execution of "kollabo" journalists was scaring even high-riding Resistance writers with the realization that the world had gone a long way since the whole international literary world had protested against the imprisonment of Aragon for an anti-military poem.

intimate, Colonel Rémy: "I regret not having noted down the conversation in detail, but I believe I do not falsify the thought of my illustrious interlocutor in this resumé: the Armistice being signed, and our country placed before a *fait accompli*, it was not a bad thing for France to have two strings to its bow, one played by De Gaulle, the other by Pétain, it being understood that they both had to be in tune with the exclusive profit of the Nation."

The supposed extremes are thus preparing to meet. General de Gaulle, still publicly opposing "reconciliation" in order to appeal to the Resistance tradition, lets it be understood that he sees collaborationism in its "true," i.e., patriotic, light, thus rallying ex-Pétainists for his anti-democratic struggle.

Malraux, with his "great new issue," and Fabre-Luce, with his cynical understanding, rally readily to what is essentially Gaullism's doctrine, though not yet formulated: for France to flourish, a strong state with re-established authority must place the nation's general interests above those of any group or class. This Bonapartist demagoguery is not new: compare Hitler's "*Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz*." But there are more specific Gaullist articles of faith that also please Malraux and the Pétainists: elimination of all Communists from political life, restoration of France's grip on the colonies (the author of *Man's Fate* now calls this the only alternative to chaos), a strong army, annulment of the nationalizations of industry, etc., etc.

The motives of these recruits are obvious. But Gaullism also attracts "realist" leftist intellectuals for whom politics has become only the recurring choice of the lesser evil. Such people love to prove they have no "illusions" left, and, like Arthur Koestler, salve their consciences by publicly admitting all the faults of the camp they join. Among them are the ex-leaders of the newspaper *Combat*, notably Albert Ollivier and Pascal Pia, who now edit the RPF organ *Rassemblement*. These liberal humanitarians, fearing Stalinism as the greater evil, consider the "third force" too feeble a bulwark. They hope that by getting in on the ground floor they will

keep the RPF from growing too authoritarian and perhaps give the movement a leftist twist before General de Gaulle crystallizes into a complete reactionary. They do not hesitate to declare themselves (probably to the secret amusement—if he is capable of being amused—of the General himself) the true heirs of Robespierre and Saint-Just, to proclaim the 1848 Republic as the "truly French state" they want to reestablish, to enthuse about the 1871 Commune "which united the urge for national liberation and social justice just as the Resistance did," and to stand as disciples of Proudhon's "French socialism" as against "foreign-born Marxist dogmatism." Their demagoguery can combine in one issue of their paper a commemorative article on Jaurès and an editorial demanding destruction of German unity. Their leading spokesman, Raymond Aron, recently tried to demonstrate in his new book *Le Grand Schisme* how Stalinism (representing electorally one-third of the nation) can be eliminated from public life without endangering civil liberties.

Are they justified in concluding, as did James Burnham in his dialogue with Malraux, that Gaullism "has not yet crystallized" and that "it is impossible as yet to define it because it is still in the process of defining itself"? Of course not; and Burnham knows better. If they are sincere, those French intellectuals whose fear of Stalinism blinds them now to the real nature of Gaullism will soon be driven into either Burnhamesque cynicism or still another pirouette.

A SIMILAR choice faced one group of intellectuals long before the RPF dreamed of seizing power: the centrist Catholics. They followed the General unhesitatingly till in 1946 he turned against "tri-partism" (hence against their MRP) and proposed his own constitution. They had to choose between their party and their hero.

Many Catholic intellectuals swam with the then anti-Gaullist tide. But the MRP, clinging to power, became discredited; the Right-Center circles to whom Mauriac and his associates speak wanted "an end to the

comedy" that was destroying "the state's authority"; repeated social and economic crises were causing governmental instability. Now, with the MRP likely to lose half its strength at the next Assembly elections, Schuman and Mauriac seem to have bet on the wrong horse: time to realign.

But to get back to the General is not easy for such guilt-ridden Catholic intellectuals. The "early" Gaullists keep pounding them as "apostates." Since they asserted their choice was a matter of "principle," it is difficult today to reverse it without opening themselves to the charge of opportunism. Thus they must await an external event that will enable them to claim that "the objective situation has changed." It won't be long.

Whereas the Catholic sub-current of Schuman, Mauriac, and the *Figaro* academicians (Siegfried, Tharaud, *et al.*) saw in the MRP a rallying point for "moderates," another group of Catholic Left-Center democrats took the MRP's leftish doctrine at its face value. Its best representatives have for fifteen years been grouped round the excellent monthly *Esprit*, edited by the able Emmanuel Mounier. The *Esprit* group worked out a rational doctrine of Christian humanitarianism that included fighting for social justice and defending human rights against numerous tyrannies (including that of the state). During the Resistance, they startled many observers by turning up close to Stalinism.* Today the *Esprit* group, having broken with both the MRP and Stalinism, is engaged in an interesting effort to "re-think" some political fundamentals. The "socialist" content of its philosophy and its passionate defense of civil rights, clashing with Gaullism's aims, caused it to face the RPF challenge unhesitatingly.

*So close that parallel groups within the MRP later constituted a crypto-Stalinist Union des Chrétiens Progressistes. This formation has persisted, and so disturbed the hierarchy that at the beginning of February Cardinal Suhard publicly warned the Catholics in it that they were on a dangerous path. Even after the break with Stalinism, *Esprit's* attitude remains naive, scolding the Stalinists for a lack of "ideological sincerity" and advising them what changes in policy would enable them to emerge from the "isolation" and "distrust" surrounding them.

Disappointed with the MRP's hopeless conservatism, *Esprit*, together with other Catholic left-wingers, has now joined Sartre's and Rousset's Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire, where it hopes to achieve a synthesis "between personalism and Marxism."

THE main axis along which realignments are being made in France today is, of course, the question of Stalinism, which is gradually polarizing intellectuals around either Stalinism or Gaullism. But some, still refusing to be trapped into the "lesser evil," have reached a temporary habitation in the RDR, a curious well-meaning mixture of left-wing Catholic, left-wing Socialist, ex-Trotskyist, Existentialist, and independent intellectuals.

There is that part of the *Combat* group which refuses to accept Gaullism as the only "reasonable" alternative to Stalinism; that part of the *Franc-Tireur* group which refuses to consider Stalinism the only "realist" opposition to Gaullism. There are the principal writers in Sartre's magazine, *Les Temps Modernes*.

At one extreme is David Rousset, brilliant author of *L'Univers concentrationnaire* and *Les Jours de notre mort*. A product of orthodox Marxism, he became temporarily Stalinoid, but has in the last year broken away. He tries to maintain a generally Marxist viewpoint, at least a historical and sociological perspective. He believes only socialism can emancipate the individual. Far from considering the world as absurd and its driving forces as blind and uncontrollable, he tries to subject them to critical analysis.

How far in the other direction can the RDR go in all-inclusiveness? As far as Albert Camus, in the opinion of RDR leader Jean-Paul Sartre. Camus, talented novelist, playwright, and essayist, broke not only with Stalinism but with Marxism and its historical and sociological *Weltanschauung*. In his best-seller *The Plague* he illustrates his underlying idea that in an absurd world where blind uncontrollable forces destroy man's individuality, we must, without the crutch

of religion, reduce our fellow-men's misery as a step back to individualism as a social morale. His ambition is to be the "bad conscience of Communism in the same way that Communism was the bad conscience of the 19th-century liberals."

If the RDR were a political party, its lack of ideological homogeneity would soon blow it up: in politics, a *positive* program is essential. But in a looser grouping of less defined political character, the RDR founders feel, it suffices to agree on certain negative objectives. These they have defined as the prevention of two things: a totalitarian state, and France's involvement in either of the international blocs moving toward a third world war.

One of their recent activities consisted of backing and propagandizing the well-meaning efforts of Garry Davis, the young American who abandoned US citizenship and declared himself "a citizen of the world." It was mostly RDR journalists and publicists who organized the startlingly big meetings at the Salle Pleyel and Vélodrome d'Hiver, and the weekly two-page supplement in *Combat*. But their support of the symbolic and touching little man who is naively fighting for world peace contains the same scepticism they show toward any political action. If the RDR backs Garry Davis, it is because it feels that his followers are the same kind of people as themselves: unable to get agreement for anything specific, they all feel strongly about what they, and the "integral"-pacifists, are *against*.

They claim to be motivated neither by subjective hope nor by the objective probability of success. Indeed, one reason they refuse to constitute a political party is that they believe it neither possible nor advisable to speak with the dogmatism and fanaticism for which the Stalinists are notorious. For they consider Stalinism not an enemy political organization to be destroyed, but a moral illness of the labor movement, symptom of a deeper illness of humanity, curable only by fundamentally different methods. Thus certain RDR spokesmen do not even claim they will succeed, but feel that the only

thing to do is struggle along the chosen road independently of results.

Yet there is a political pragmatism in RDR doctrine not unlike that of the other *rassemblement*. Certain RDR leaders want a programmatic framework broad enough to include the maximum number of people disgusted with traditional parties yet opposed to Gaullist authoritarianism. There is here a basic contradiction between a pragmatic desire for "an effective change in the balance of power, achieved as soon as possible," and the movement's organizational non-political idealism. The first attitude is best expressed by Rousset (*Les Temps Modernes*, July 1948); the second by Sartre (*Paris New York Herald-Tribune*, June 2, 1948). Future events will probably divide its component intellectuals—probably around the choice between political efficiency and moral guarantees—and send them off to new movements. Indeed, at the recent rally held in opposition to the Paris Communist-sponsored "peace conference," the RDR showed definite signs of splitting at the seams.

ALL intellectual France thus seems to be engaged in a sort of mass puss-in-the corner. Will it continue? Well, as long as French intellectuals maintain their incorrigible individualism and contempt of systematic thought, as long as their hatred of mental discipline and love of brilliant improvisation leave them at the mercy of unforeseen external events that morally require them "to take a position," it is hard to see what is to stop them.

Three general trends, however, can be discerned: the polarizations around Stalinism and Gaullism, and the first beginnings of a third, revolutionary tendency, of which the RDR is the groping and naive forerunner. The politico-literary kaleidoscope should settle gradually to that roughly tripartite pattern. But on the day that it is no longer disrupted suddenly by a handful of intellectuals, brandishing a manifesto, marching off from one group to another, France will have ceased to be France.